RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, 28th November 1996/7th Agrahayana 1918 (Saka).

The House met at eleven of the clock.

Mr. Chairman *in the Chair.*

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTIONS

Import of VSAT Equipments

*101. SHRI V. RAJESHWAR RAO:
SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD:†

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the actual role of National Centre for Software Technology (NCST) in VSAT Scheme.

(b) whether NCST has entrusted most of the functions in this scheme to private parties and it is acting as organizer or middle man;

(c) whether VSAT equipments are imported by the NCST; if so, their actual cost limit in the exporting country, the ex- Bombay cost and the sale price to consumers;

(d) the reasons for charging huge commission from educational institutions; and

(e) the profits earned by the NCST on 50 VSATs installed in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (e) to (o): A Statement is laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha.

Statement

(a) the National Centre for Software Technology (NCST), an autonomous Society under the administrative control of the Department of Electronics (DOE) carries out tasks of acquiring Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) equipment (placing of orders, opening of Letter of Credit (LC), payments, Custom clearance etc.) including equipments required at the central hub at Bangalore and handles financial matters, as a part of task assigned under VSAT scheme of Eduation and Research Network (ERNET) project of the DOE.

(b) The NCST has given the contracts for maintenance of VSAT Equipments to a private party namely M/s Hughes Escorts Communications Ltd., New Delhi who are the Indian subsidiary of the principal supplier of the equipment with expertise and nationwide network to undertake the job. These contracts are coming into operation progressively. Installation and commissioning responsibility has also been entrusted to the same party, except for the the initial batch. All other operational functions are done by the Department of Electronics and its autonomous Societies.

(c) to (e) Yes, Sir. The VAST equipments are imported by NCST from M/s Hughes Network Systems (HNS), USA at Freight on Board (FOB) price of US $ 9928.00 per unit.

The landed cost of one unit of VSAT equipment at Delhi including freight, insurance and clearance is Rs.3,89,303/-. In addition, expediture of Rs.3,56,412/- is incurred towards counterpart incremental capital investment per VSAT at the Hub (Backbone of VSAT of Network) and about Rs.36,000/- for transportation, site survey, installation and commissioning of the equipment is also incurred - thus amounting to a direct total expenditure of Rs.7.81 lakhs (Approx.) incurred by the DOE for each VSAT. Against this, only Rs.7.5 lakhs is collected from the user organisation per VSAT.

NCST does not charge any commission and neither are profits earned.

† The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Jagir Singh Dard.

SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD: How many VSATs are there in Punjab? What steps will be taken to encourage setting up of more VSATs in Punjab?

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Sir, we have VSATs at the Regional Engineering College at Chandigarh and at the Punjabi University at Patiala in Punjab. As and when requests are received, the Department of Electronics looks into them. It is intended to expand this programme.

SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD: According to the present capacity of the hub at Bangalore, how many more VSATs can be set up?

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Sir, we have ordered about 50 more VSATs. We have been able to persuade the Department of Telecommunications to continue with the ERNET scheme. We will examine this whole issue in the Ninth Five-Year Plan because we think the ERNET programme is very important for giving the computer and electronic capability to our educational system.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Sir, this VSAT scheme is an excellent and useful scheme. I must congratulate the Minister, Mr. Alagh, who is taking a great interest in these electronic schemes. The schemes are very useful particularly in the MPLADSs.

The difficulty is the great delay in the supply of the equipment. For one school in Nagpur, we have paid Rs. 5,70,000 in the month of June for installation of the VSAT equipment. The equipment for all other schemes have come, and they have been installed, but the VSAT equipment is not coming. I do not know the reasons. Part (a) of my supplementary is: how will this delay be reduced, and when will this equipment arrive?

Part (b) is that they have given this contract to some private company. We cannot contact them. Somebody comes and does something or the other at the site. We do not know what they are. We cannot contact them. So, we cannot do the follow-up. Therefore, more complications are created. The maintenance charges are Rs. 70,000/-. The subscription charges are Rs. 3 lakhs which the hon. Minister has agreed to waive for schools. So, because this contract has been given to a private company, we are apprehensive. What will happen in future? So, my second supplementary is regarding this.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Actually, the top expert in the country on VSATs and MPLADs is the hon. Member himself because he takes a lot of interest. In fact, he is one of the originators of this scheme. We are, in fact, trying to associatae him in relooking at the whole scheme. I have to get permission from various parliamentary bodies because I think there is some restriction on associating Members of Parliament with committees. As far as his two questions are concerned, Sir, what happens is on the first on where all those have to be given VSAT, it is done in a bunched manner. It is only when we get 30 or 40 requests, we get the approval and then we order for them. That takes a little time. Then, it takes around four months to get through the whole process of letters of credit, customs clearance and so on. So, that is the first one.

On the second one, it is a very interesting question. I went into it in detail and what happened was that originally the equipment was given to us under the UNDP grant and the UNDP went through the purchase procedure. They gave us Hughes equipment which is a famous electronic company. Normally you want the original equipment vendor to do the maintenance. We have given the maintenance contracts to M/s. Hughes Escorts which is the Indian subsidiary of Hughes Exports. There have been some problems in getting this contract through. I am happy to inform the hon. Member that we have sorted it out recently. I hope that they would be able to give more satisfactory services to the users.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Thank you. I am nearly satisfied.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Thank you.

D.R. GUPTA

Revival of the J and K Economy

*102. PROF. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have drawn any plan to revive the J and K economy, after drestoration of popular Government in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a time-bound programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI S.R.. BALASUBRAMONIYAN): (a) The State Government is in the process of drawing up a comprehensive plan for this purpose.

(b) The plan would aim at gradual restoration of the state economy, reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure, jobs for the educated unemployed youth and measures for private participation in building of economic infrastructure in the State.

(c) While economic development is a continuous activity, for the present, the plan would be coterminus with the 9th five year plan period i.e. 1997-98 to 2001-2002 AD.

PROF. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Sir, the reply given by the hon. Minister is very sketchy and unsatisfactory. Now that a popular Government has been installed in Jammu and Kashmir, it is time to review the social, economic and political situation prevailing in the State and to take concrete measures to put the economy back on rails. The State of Jammu and kashmir has got immense tourism potential. There is a need to take an indepth view of the present tourism industry in the State. My first supplementary is: (a) What are the concrete plans the Government has drawn to rehabilitate the shattered tourism industry of the State?

SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir the Government is aware that revival of tourism industry is very important. So, the Government has taken a number of measures to infuse confidence among the people and to revive the tourism industry. Though it has not yet completely recovered, I think, the Government would be in a position to revive the tourism industry shortly.

PROF. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, now the need is to bring the youth of Kashmir into the mainstream of development. I would like to know from the Minister : Has the Government drawn up any blue-print for drawing the youth of the State in various development projects? Is there any crash programme to mobilise the youth for building up the economy of Jammu and Kashmir?

SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the popular Government which has just now taken over there is in the process of taking steps. Already a number of steps have been taken. In the last five years 10,090 youths have been recruited in the CPMFs. Since January, 1996, the State Government has filled up 5,340 posts. Nearly, 2,200 persons have been recruited in the CPMFs for two battalions. More emphasis has been laid on the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, EAS, IRDP and self-employment schemes. Now, a surrender policy has been announced. After the announcement of the surrender policy on the 15th August, 1995 nearly 1.099 posts have been surrendered. A stipend of Rs. 1,500/- is being given to them. A training programme has been evolved for them.

SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Sir, There is a need to do industrialisation in Jammu and Kashmir at a very, very fast rate. I